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DAWN

Pakistan seeks world help to stop arms flow to terror groups

UN's attention drawn to presence of modern arms in Afghanistan

UNITED NATIONS: Pakistan has called for global action to stop the illicit flows of weapons to terrorist groups in Afghanistan such as the UN-sanctioned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) and its Majeed Brigade, and ensure that Taliban adhere to their international obligations and commitments in that regard.

"Weapons confiscated at the Pakistan-Afghanistan border are traced back to stockpiles of weapons left behind by foreign forces in Afghanistan and illegal weapons being sold across black markets in Afghanistan," Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, permanent representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, told the UN Security Council on Monday.

Speaking in a debate on 'Small Arms and Light Weapons', convened by Sierra Leone, the rotating president of the 15-member Council for November, he said Pakistan was seriously concerned about the presence of stockpiles of sophisticated arms and ammunition in Afghanistan that pose a direct threat to neighbouring countries.

"The movement of unmarked or unregistered weapons across the international border sustain and aid non-state armed groups, terrorist networks, and criminal gangs, undermining regional security and stability," the Pakistani envoy said, voicing deep concern over the acquisition and use of these mostly abandoned, modern and potent weapons by terrorist groups based in Afghanistan that continue to pose serious challenge to peace and security in Pakistan and the broader region.

"Terrorist entities including ISIL-K, TTP Fitna Al Khawarij, a UN listed terrorist organisation, and the BLA and Majeed Brigade, which operate with impunity from Afghanistan, enabled by external financing and support of principal destabilising actor in the region, have used these weapons against Pakistani civilians and law-enforcement agencies leading to the loss of thousands of innocent lives," Ambassador Asim Ahmad told the Security Council.

"The international community needs to step up its efforts and plug gaps in its response to effectively address these threats to international and regional peace and security."

The Pakistani envoy said that the illicit transfer and unchecked use of small arms and light weapons have a direct impact on intensifying and prolonging conflicts, endangering socio-economic progress, and undermining the prospects of peace and security, particularly at the regional and sub-regional levels.

Pointing out that small arms and light weapons are neither small nor light, he said these arms impede development prospects, contribute to human rights abuses and imperil peace, security and stability.

"While new technologies have introduced new challenges in manufacturing and proliferation of illicit arms manufacturing, new avenues of effective control and international cooperation have also opened up which need to be fully utilised," said Ambassador Asim Ahmad, who also expressed concern over the emergence of 3D-printed weapons and the online circulation of digital blueprints for weapons manufacturing.

Earlier, senior United Nations and civil society leaders urged more robust action to stem the bloody and destabilising flow of small arms and light weapons, as they briefed the Security Council.

More than one billion firearms are in circulation globally, said Deputy High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Adedeji Ebo. Their continued proliferation is both a symptom and a driver of the multiple security crises that the world is facing.

Presenting the secretary-general's latest biennial report and citing several important developments at the international and regional levels, Ebo said major challenges nevertheless remain.

In particular, he said, the illicit trade in arms and misuse of small arms and light weapons fuels violence, terrorism and organised crime as seen in persistent arms embargo violations in Libya, Yemen, Haiti and elsewhere. Weapons diverted from national stockpiles, or at any point throughout the supply chain, could end up in the hands of non-state groups. Illicitly manufactured and craft-produced arms, such as 3D-printed weapons, are now also available in many black markets.

Noting that the purchase of illicit weapons by ordinary people is often a symptom of poor governance, Ebo said weak public safety mechanisms and limited state capacity often prompt communities to arm themselves for protection or self-defence. However, they too often become instruments of human suffering when used without effective control. In 2024 alone, there were at least 48,000 conflict-related civilian deaths committed by small arms, representing a 40 per cent increase from 2023.—APP

EAST PUNJAB: Smoke rises on Tuesday from the burning stubble in a crop field at Mansa in the Indian state of Punjab.—Reuters

'Terror' law invoked as Modi alleges Delhi blast 'conspiracy'

Opposition parties demand a thorough probe to reassure 'transparent action'

NEW DELHI: Indian police are investigating a deadly car explosion in New Delhi under an anti-terrorism law, officials have said, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi promised to apprehend those responsible for what he called a "conspiracy" behind the blast.

India's anti-terrorism force, the National Investigation Agency, is yet to give exact details of what caused Monday's incident near the historic Red Fort, one of India's most well-known landmarks, and the site of the prime minister's annual Independence Day speech.

Delhi police have invoked India's primary "counterterrorism" law, registering a case under Sections 16 and 18 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, or UAPA, along with provisions of the Explosives Act. This means that even though officials have yet to formally confirm the cause of the blast or name suspects, they appear to be treating the explosion as a potential act of "terrorism", not just a criminal or accidental blast.

'Agencies to get to bottom of conspiracy'

"I assure everyone that the agencies will get to the bottom of the entire conspiracy," Modi said, in a speech during a state visit to neighbouring Bhutan, without giving further details. "All those involved will be brought to justice." Indian authorities have stepped short of calling the blast an attack, saying they were awaiting forensic analysis.

The explosion on Monday came hours after Indian police said they had arrested a gang and seized explosive materials and assault rifles.

Police said the men were 'linked with Jaish-e-Mohammed' and Ansar Ghazwat-ul-Hind'.

Both groups are listed as terrorist organisations in India.

Home Minister Amit Shah, after chairing security talks following the blast, said he had instructed officials "to hunt down each and every culprit behind this incident".

"Everyone involved in this act will face the full wrath of our agencies," he added.

New Delhi's deputy chief fire officer AK Malik told journalists shortly after the explosion that eight people had been killed. *The Press Trust of India* news agency reported on Tuesday that the death toll had risen to 12, although that figure has not been confirmed.

Opposition demands probe

On the other hand, amid Bihar elections, opposition leaders of India's parliament have demanded a thorough probe into the Red Fort blast. Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge, Rashtriya Janata Dal leader Tejashwi Yadav, Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav and AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi are among the Opposition leaders who sought a 'prompt and thorough investigation' to 'reassure the public with fair and transparent action'.

It was the first significant security incident since a shooting attack in late April that left 26 mainly Hindu civilians dead at the tourist site of Pahalgam in India-occupied Kashmir, triggering clashes with Pakistan.—Agencies

Pakistan, UK to sign MoU to combat corruption

By Syed Irfan Raza

ISLAMABAD: The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) and the United Kingdom's National Crime Agency (NCA) on Tuesday agreed to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen their partnership in combating corruption.

The decision was made during a meeting between the NAB's Acting Chairman Sohail Nasser with NCA Director General Graeme Biggar.

According to a NAB press release, the primary objective of the meeting was to enhance bilateral cooperation between the two agencies and finalise the MoU on information exchange and capacity building.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr Nasser lauded the cooperation extended by NCA in finalising the MoU draft. He assured that NAB was committed to completing all necessary legal formalities at the earliest to conclude this important agreement.

The acting chairman highlighted the existing strong cooperation between NAB and the UK's anti-corruption agencies, which currently operates through both formal and informal channels of information exchange. He said the proposed MoU would be a significant milestone in further strengthening mutual anti-corruption efforts between the two countries.

The MoU is expected to enhance timely cooperation between the law enforcement agencies of both nations, laying the foundation for swift recovery of stolen assets and effective handling of corruption cases. Both sides also agreed to expand informal exchanges of intelligence and information related to corruption, financial crimes and money laundering.

IHC issues notices to Adiala jail official on contempt plea

By Malik Asad

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Tuesday issued notices to relevant authorities while hearing a contempt of court petition filed by lawyer Salman Akram Raja for having been denied a meeting with the incarcerated founder of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI), despite a clear judicial order permitting it.

Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir heard the petition and sought explanation from officials concerned over non-implementation of the court's earlier directive.

Mr Raja appeared in person and informed the court that despite the written order, he was not allowed to meet the former prime minister at Adiala jail.

He said SHO Aizaz failed to comply with the court's instructions, saying, "The order was explicit, yet I was barred from meeting my client."

He further requested the court to allow the deputy registrar (judicial) to accompany him to the jail to ensure compliance. However, Justice Tahir declined, observing, "No, we cannot send him along. We will issue notices, and action will be taken strictly according to the law."

The court then summoned the assistant attorney general to the rostrum and questioned why the meeting did not take place despite the IHC's clear direction.

Justice Tahir remarked that if Mr Raja could not meet his client, "how will he assist us in the Twitter/X case?"

The assistant attorney general responded that he would again convey the court's order to the authorities concerned to ensure its implementation. Subsequently, the bench issued notices to the home secretary, Adiala jail superintendent, and other respondents, seeking their replies before the next hearing.

The court adjourned the proceedings, with the next date to be communicated through a written order.

US state leaders take stage at UN climate summit — without Trump

• California governor claims Democratic president will rejoin Paris Accord • Ethiopia endorsed to host COP32 in 2027

BELM: American state leaders, led by governors of California and New Mexico, are drawing attention on the second day of the UN climate summit in Brazilian Amazon.

California Governor Gavin Newsom, who heads the world's fourth-largest economy, and New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham are representing state-level climate leadership amid Washington's absence.

Newsom, known for his sharp criticism of Republican policies, told an audience at a Milken Institute event in Sao Paulo on Monday: "We are doubling down on stupid in the United States of America — not in my state of California."

'Paris climate accord to be rejoined'

A future Democratic president would rejoin the Paris climate accord "without hesitation," California Governor Gavin Newsom said Tuesday, slamming President Donald Trump for pulling the United States out of the deal.

"It's a moral commitment, it's an economic imperative, it's both – and it's an abomination that he has twice, not once, pulled away from the accords," Newsom said in response to a question by *AFP*.

Newsom is expected to highlight California's environmental record, including its $4.1 trillion economy — now powered two-thirds by clean energy — and its Cap-and-Invest carbon market, which has been extended until 2045.

The California governor's agenda in Brazil includes meetings with Helder Barbalho, governor of Par state — where the COP30 host city Belem is located — and with New Mexico's Grisham.

Governor Grisham, meanwhile, represents a major fossil fuel-producing state but has worked to curb methane emissions and promote renewable energy in New Mexico.

US President Donald Trump, who made fossil fuel expansion a central focus of his second term, withdrew the United States from the Paris Climate Accord upon returning to office in January.

However, experts say state governments can still follow the climate policies initiated under former president Joe Biden.

"The states have that roadmap; they can still follow it and keep to the spirit of Paris," said Champa Patel, executive director for governments and policy at the Climate Group, which runs the global Under2 Coalition.

Still, questions linger over the limits of state-level action. Trump's Republicans recently passed a law bringing an early end to clean energy tax credits enacted under Biden that is seen as a potentially crippling blow to the renewable sector.

Ethiopia to host 2027 summit

Meanwhile, Ethiopia is set to host the UN's COP32 climate summit in 2027 after the Africa Group of Negotiators endorsed the move.

"The AGN has endorsed Ethiopia," Richard Muyungi, the group's chair told *AFP*. The Brazilian presidency of COP30, currently underway in Belem, confirmed the African countries' choice.

"We welcome the announcement of COP32 in Ethiopia and look forward to elevating Africa's climate priorities and leadership," said Rukiya Khamis, Africa senior organiser at the nonprofit 350.org.—Agencies

Partition of Gaza a looming risk as Trump's plan falters

European officials say reconstruction appeared likely to be limited to Israel-controlled area, can lead to years of separation

MANAMA: A de facto partition of Gaza between an area controlled by Israel and another ruled by Hamas is increasingly likely, multiple sources said, with efforts to advance US President Donald Trump's plan to end the war beyond a ceasefire faltering.

Six European officials with direct knowledge of the efforts to implement the next phase of the plan told Reuters it was effectively stalled and that reconstruction now appeared likely to be limited to the Israel-controlled area. That could lead to years of separation, they warned.

Under the first stage of the plan, which took effect on Oct 10, the Israeli military currently occupies 53 per cent of the Mediterranean territory, including much of its farmland, along with Rafah in the south, parts of Gaza City and other urban areas. Nearly all of Gaza's 2 million people are crammed into tent camps and the rubble of shattered cities across the rest of Gaza, which is under Hamas control.

Reuters drone footage shot in November shows cataclysmic destruction in the northeast of Gaza City after Israel's final assault before the ceasefire, following months of prior bombardments. The area is now split between Israeli and Hamas control.

The next stage of the plan foresees Israel withdrawing further from the so-called yellow line agreed under Trump's plan, alongside the establishment of a transitional authority to govern Gaza, the deployment of a multinational security force meant to take over from the Israeli military, the disarmament of Hamas and the start of reconstruction. But the plan provides no timelines or mechanisms for implementation.

Meanwhile, Hamas refuses to disarm, Israel rejects any involvement by the Western-backed Palestinian Authority, and uncertainty persists over the multinational force.

WORKERS start the rehabilitation on what remains of the Pasha's Palace, destroyed by the Israeli military and which once housed 40,000 artifacts representing the succession of civilisations in the region, in Gaza City.—AFP

"We're still working out ideas," Jordanian foreign minister Ayman Safadi said at a Manama security conference this month. "Everybody wants this conflict over, all of us want the same endgame here. Question is, how do we make it work?"

Without a major push by the United States to break the impasse, the yellow line looks set to become the de facto border indefinitely dividing Gaza, according to 18 sources, among them the six European officials and a former US official familiar with the talks.

The United States has drafted a UN Security Council resolution that would grant the multinational force and a transitional governing body a two-year mandate. But ten diplomats said governments remain hesitant to commit troops. European and Arab nations, in particular, were unlikely to participate if responsibilities extended beyond peacekeeping, and meant direct confrontation with Hamas or other Palestinian groups, they said.

A State Department spokesperson said that while "tremendous progress" had been made in advancing Trump's plan, there was more work to do, without responding to questions about whether reconstruction would be limited to the Israeli-controlled area.

Hazem Qassem, a Hamas spokesperson in Gaza City, said that the group was ready to hand over power to a Palestinian technocrat entity so that reconstruction could begin. "All the regions of Gaza deserve reconstruction equally," he said.

Gaza City resident Salah Abu Amr, 62, said that if no progress was made on disarming Hamas and redevelopment began across the yellow line, people might think of moving there. But the realities of a divided Gaza were hard to contemplate, he said. "Are we all going to be able to move into that area? Or Israel will have a veto over the entry of some of us," he said. "Are they also going to divide the families between good people, bad people?"

It remains unclear who would finance rebuilding parts of Gaza under Israeli occupation, with Gulf nations loath to step in without involvement of the Palestinian Authority and a path to statehood, resisted by Israel. Reconstruction costs are estimated at $70 billion. Palestinian Foreign Minister Varsen Aghabekian Shahin also rejected territorial division of Gaza, and said the Palestinian Authority was ready to assume "full national responsibility." "There can be no genuine reconstruction or lasting stability without full Palestinian sovereignty over the territory," she said in a statement in response to questions.—Reuters

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